

extremely faint, and most of the signatures have vanished wholly.

While the Declaration was exposed to view at the Patent Office, it was so placed that at a certain hour each day a beam of bright sunlight, slanting through a window, struck the middle part of it, just below the body of the text. As might have been expected, it caused a fading of the writing where it fell, and as a result most of the signatures on that part of the document have disappeared, although those on the left-hand and right-hand lower corners are clearly legible, some of them being actually black. The signature of John Hancock, which was written much more heavily than any of the others, could be seen readily at a distance of twelve feet or so a dozen years ago, whereas now it can be deciphered only on close scrutiny, a fact which shows how rapidly the manuscript has been fading.

The original copper-plate, the making of which proved so costly, naturally is regarded as extremely precious, being the next thing to the vanishing original. It is preserved with utmost care by the Department of State, which under no circumstances will permit any more prints to be made from it. Sometime ago it was reproduced in the form of an electrototype, which may be employed for printing purposes when Congress is pleased so to direct. Under the circumstances it is fortunate that the people have in their possession such perfect copies, with means for making others, of the most valuable document in the national archives.

Other documents of exceptional importance belonging to the same epoch, happily are to-day in a condition of admirable preservation. The Articles of Confederation of the Colonies, which are on a long roll composed of parchment sheets neatly sewed together, appear as if they had been written yesterday. Equally well preserved is the Constitution, though its edges have been broken slightly by keeping it rolled in a cylindrical tin box. In 1883 it was transferred to a portfolio specially made for it, and nine years later it was placed between sheets of glass in a steel safe. The text is perfect, except that the words "We the People," in great letters, have been crumbled somewhat by the rolling.

## The Van Twiller Diamonds

(Continued from page 10)

landed in a little bit of trouble of my own. It's not financial—I only wish it was."

"What—sort of trouble?" Franklin inquired, somewhat controlling the breaks in his voice. "Anything where I might—try to get even?"

"N-no, I think not," said Wooster slowly. "It came about through a friend of mine whose name I'd rather not reveal. I guess perhaps, on the whole, I'd better not say anything further about it."

"Play fair," said Van Twiller. "Come, Ned, give me a chance, for a word of sympathy, at least."

"Well—it's a queer boggle—far too much for me, old fellow. Good Lord! Frank, I have wanted to speak to some one—to ask for something to hope for—some little straw of advice!"

Frank put forth his hand, and they shook.

"At the house of a friend, a few nights ago," said Wooster, "I was asked to do an extraordinary thing. This friend put into my hand a necklace of diamonds and begged me to open her father's safe and put them in. That's all, except it seemed to mean so much to her, and—well—I was finally persuaded to undertake the task."

Van Twiller looked at him peculiarly. "Yes?" he said. "A girl—her father's safe?"

"Frank, don't think me quite an ass. I knew it was worse than dangerous, or playing with fire—in fact, a treacherous, sneaking thing to do, and foolish beyond all bounds of temerity; but—I suppose



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it was like cotton—I thought I could do it, and win."

"And she—a girl—thought of such a thing as that?" said Frank in evident excitement. "Go on—yes. What happened then?"

"What could happen but the wrong thing? I opened the safe—thanks to my cursed acquaintance with old-fashioned combinations—and I put in the stones. Then, when I had locked it up and was starting to go, there was her father standing behind me, with a six-shooter pointed at my head."

"Oh, blazes!"

"That's it, Frank, just exactly," Nelson agreed, and rapidly, baldly, he added all he could of what had taken place subsequently, without revealing the names of Franklin's father and sister. Naturally also he made no mention of his engagement and the complications added thereby. He ended the recital with a laugh that was painful to hear.

"I don't know what to expect, at any moment," he said. "But, gods! Frank, don't I wish I had only been fooling with cotton instead!"

Van Twiller was silent for a moment. Then he said: "I don't know what to say, old man."

"Of course you don't. I knew you wouldn't. I was not expecting help, for I don't see how there can be any help; but at least it has done me good to let it all out, for once. If you do think of anything that might explain the attitude of the friend who asked my help, why, let me know. Only—I wouldn't like to hear any hints that her motive was questionable. Meantime, Frank, I hope you will make up friends with rest and happiness again. Now that I look at you, poor old man, you're pale and drawn—"

[To be concluded next Sunday]

## Synopsis of Previous Chapters

AILEEN, the daughter of Major Van Twiller, a retired American army officer, persuaded Nelson Wooster, who had become her fiancé that evening, to open her father's safe and place in it a diamond necklace belonging to her mother, refusing to explain the reason for her request. The Major caught Wooster in the act of closing the safe, and accused him of theft and threatened him with arrest and disgrace. Wooster refused to mention Aileen's name in connection with the incident. Van Twiller consented to postpone the exposure until the following day, so that Wooster could attend a little friend who was to undergo an operation at a hospital.

Mrs. Van Twiller entered the room as the men were in the heat of conversation; but, knowing nothing of the dispute, insisted upon Wooster's taking part in the house party of the evening. The Major, to his disgust, was forced by the circumstances to consent. Wooster was presented to Winnie Fitzmorris, who confided that she had been married secretly to Franklin Van Twiller, Aileen's brother, who, she said, was engaged in some secret business.

Wooster went to the Major's house the next day, as agreed. The Major was about to summon an officer to arrest him, when Aileen rushed into the room and telephoned to a friend announcing her engagement to Wooster, requesting that the news be given to the newspapers. The Major was outwitted, as he adored his daughter, and could not bear to tell her of what he considered Wooster's rascality. So he postponed further action until he could form a plan.

## Concealed Weapon

(Continued from page 11)

one hundred dollars for every offense.

This law not only prohibits the sale of deadly weapons to minors, but equally prohibits the lending, hiring or giving by any person of a deadly weapon to a minor, under a penalty of one hundred dollars' fine or three months' imprisonment or both.

A crusade should be instituted immediately in all cities of the country against the illegal carriers of deadly weapons. All offenders should be heavily punished, after due public notice of such a crusade, and the result would be that the reckless class of the community and the foreign knife-carrying element would be disbanded. A further enactment of the District of Columbia law in all States, giving the police departments rigid control of the sale of weapons, and enabling them to trail each purchaser, would establish the reform permanently.

And as has been said, crimes of violence in the country would thus be diminished to the extent of about fifty thousand per annum. It seems to me that such a reform would appeal to every public-spirited citizen. And if it does not, his own safety and that of his family in public places certainly will.